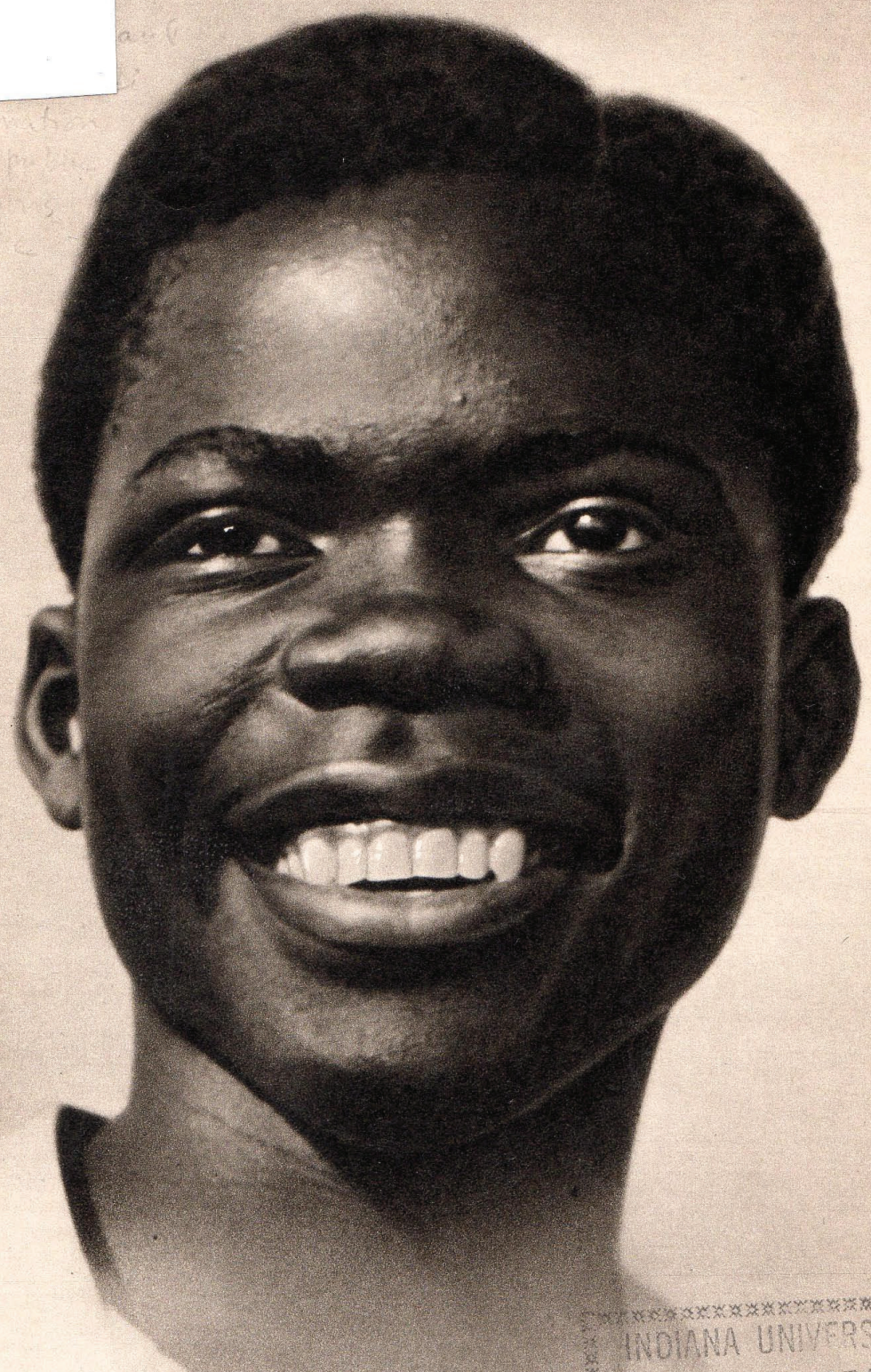


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Political Future



of the Belgian Congo

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**The message
of His Majesty King Baudouin**
broadcast on January 13, 1959
**by the Institut National Belge de Radiodiffusion
and Radio Congo Belge**

My dear Fellow-Citizens in Belgium and in the Congo,

In response to what has long been expected, the Government in Brussels will announce before Parliament today, a program of reforms which will open a decisive period for the future of our African populations.

I feel that I owe it to the memory of my illustrious predecessors, the founders and consolidators of our enterprise in Africa, to acquaint you personally with the character and spirit of this program.

The purpose of our presence on the African continent was defined by Leopold II; to open up these backward countries to European civilization; summon their populations to emancipation, to freedom and to progress after having freed them from slavery, disease and misery.

Continuing these lofty aims, our firm resolution, today, is to lead the Congolese populations, without harmful procrastination, but also without thoughtless haste, toward independence, in prosperity and in peace.

In a civilized world, independence is a status which combines and guarantees freedom, order, progress. The concept of freedom is impossible without sound and well-balanced institutions, experienced administrative staffs, a well-established social, economic and financial organization directed by experienced technicians, an intellectual and moral edifi-

*The Political Future
of the Belgian Congo*

The Royal message
and the Government's declaration
of January 13, 1959

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cation of the people, without which a democratic regime is merely mockery, deception and tyranny. It is to the realization of these basic conditions that we are bound and to which we all intend to devote ourselves, uniting our efforts and those of our African populations in a spirit of enthusiasm and cordiality.

If we do not hesitate to approve of, and to support the aspirations of our African brothers, we cannot, however, forget that through eighty years of services and efforts, Belgium had acquired undeniable rights to their understanding and to their loyal co-operation.

We, of the Mother Country, and the white men in the Congo, have a task as counsellors and guides that must continue, while it undergoes a transformation and loses its importance as progress is gradually achieved.

Furthermore, far from imposing upon these populations solutions that are entirely European, we intend to favor original adaptations that correspond to their fundamental characteristics and to the traditions that are dear to them. In this respect, a broad decentralization combined with a rapid development of the electoral system and the elimination of all racial discrimination between colored and white people will enable an accelerated and diversified development of the various regions according to their geographical, cultural and racial peculiarities and will also further their economic expansion.

Believe me, dear Fellow-citizens in Belgium and in the Congo, this is the course which must be followed with faith and generosity; a great and fine purpose that we shall succeed in accomplishing if we add to our joint willingness and discipline, a clear perception of the prosperous future of our two countries.

The Government's declaration

*read simultaneously on January 13, 1959
before the Chamber of Representatives
by the Prime Minister, Mr. G. Eyskens
and before the Senate by Mr. M. Van Hemelrijck,
Minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi*

As it was announced in the declaration of November 18th, 1958 the Government wishes to define its position concerning the Congo's political and administrative future.

Under the protection of our Kings, the Congolese people, after more than half a century of civilization, have reached a degree of evolution which opens the way to new progress. This movement must be accelerated, as the development of institutions and human progress throughout the modern world are accelerated.

The reforms now being considered for achieving this object draw their inspiration from the suggestions offered by the « Groupe de Travail pour l'étude des problèmes politiques au Congo belge » (Research Group for the study of the Belgian Congo's political problems) which was consti-



tuted by the preceding Government. This Group extensively consulted the circles representative of Congolese opinion and the views they obtained were absolutely sincere.

* * *

Belgium intends to organize a democracy in the Congo which will be capable of exercising the prerogatives of sovereignty and of deciding upon its independence.

As a co-signatory of the United Nations Charter, this country has furthermore confirmed its desire to lead the Congolese people to a point where they will be capable of self-government. Our entire policy in the Congo continues in this line of conduct.

As concerns the political organization, the State must be provided with solid institutions — which guarantee a viable democracy; it must respect human rights and the duties they imply.

With regard to the economy, the country's prosperity can only be secured through the work of its inhabitants, and in an atmosphere of confidence. This confidence is required

Belgiums intends to organize a democracy in the Congo...



to assure the collaboration of the technicians and the inflow of Belgian and foreign capital of which the Congo continues to have an imperative need.

In the social field, manual or intellectual workers, whether they receive wages or are independent, must attain a decent standard of living. Expansion of the economy will permit this.

The achievement of the final goal will be carried out without interruption and with the help of all the inhabitants of the Congo.

They will be gradually given the right to make their own decisions, in ever wider fields, within the framework of democracy, in pace with the transformation of the institutions. This transformation will be progressive and accelerated.

In any case, no measure committing their future will be taken without prior consultation with the political institutions functioning at that time.

* * *

It is necessary to build up the masses' civic and political consciousness through generalized education and through the development of the information media.

... the country's prosperity can only be secured through the work of its inhabitants, and in an atmosphere of confidence.



The political institutions on the various levels must draw their authority and their legitimacy from universal suffrage. Elections cannot be a caricature of democracy; exercise of the franchise will be adopted to the level attained by the elector. Democracy demands effective separation of powers.

All the citizens throughout the Congo have the right to voice their opinions. Democracy does not end at the city gates.

Time limits will be set for accomplishing precise aims, taking into account the various stages essential to the shaping of democracy. The unshakable loyalty with which each of these steps will be respected will testify to Belgium's resolution to fulfill her pledges.

Seventy-five years of collaboration between the white and black population have ensured the Congo's unity.

The territory's size, and the development of its organization, demands that an effort be made, through deconcentration and decentralization, to bring closer together the governing and the governed, the elected and the electors.

At the completion of this development it is desirable, in the interests of both countries, to maintain partnership be-



tween the Congo and Belgium, who will decide freely on this when the time comes.

* * *

In the spirit which has just been described, the Government pledges to constitute and to develop the following structures :

The municipal councillors and the large majority of the members of the councils of the rural circumscriptions will be elected by universal suffrage.

Starting with these basic communities, all the inhabitants of the Congo will be politically integrated in the Congolese community with equal rights and duties.

The territories, which are the basic regional units, will be governed by a council composed, in large majority, by councillors elected through universal suffrage.

These elected councillors together with the municipal councillors, will constitute the electoral college which, in turn, will appoint the majority of the provincial councillors and, later on, the general counsellors.

Democracy does not end at the city gates.



The municipal and territorial councils will be elected at the end of 1959. The new provincial councils will be constituted for the session to be held in March, 1960. The time allowed for is indispensable for the preliminary consultation of the advisory assemblies and for the preparation of the elections.

The General Council of the Congo, which will replace the present Government Council, will be the preliminary form of a Chamber of Representatives.

Parallel to the General Council, a Legislative Council will be instituted, the first form of a Senate. It will be composed of members elected, in particular, by the provincial councils, and of appointed members like those of the present Colonial Council, which it will replace.

In March, 1959, each of the provincial councils will appoint two counsellors to sit on the Legislative Council. The General Council and the Legislative Council will jointly exercise that share of the power of legislation and decision which will be gradually granted to them by law.

In the course of this administrative and political development in the Congo, the executive authority at each level

All traces of racial discrimination will disappear...



will be assisted by a small committee, deriving from the council competent for this particular level.

While their definite statute is being worked out, advisory colleges will be constituted immediately for the Governor General and the Provincial Governors.

* * *

In the Congo also, the various rights that the Belgians enjoy must be assured by the basic law, and their practise regulated.

All traces of racial discrimination will disappear from daily life as well as from the regulations.

The unified statute enabling the Congolese to hold office at every level of the administration has just been signed by the King; it went into effect on January 1st of this year.

The judicial reform, already partially carried out, will be continued.

Labor legislation will be improved and completed. Meanwhile, the bases for establishing the legal minimum wages will be revised.

The unified statute enabling the Congolese to hold office at every level of the administration...





These territories having also reached an important turning-point in their evolution, and the tempo of the adaptation of this traditional society to modern democratic forms being accelerated, the Government declares that, in conformity with the resolution of the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, it will propose an increasing number of reforms adapted to these regions.

* * *

In setting forth the principal points of the doctrine that it intends to apply, the Government re-affirms that the chief goal our country pursues is the welfare of the Congolese population.

This welfare depends essentially on the development of the economy in all its aspects.

Economic prosperity can only be attained in an atmosphere of order, confidence and work.

The Government will do everything to keep this atmosphere from being disturbed.

In exercising her sovereignty, Belgium has assumed re-

...the chief goal our country pursues is the welfare of the Congolese population.



sponsibilities toward all the inhabitants of the Congo. In the course of the political evolution defined in this declaration, it is her duty to maintain a sound administration and to keep it under her control.

She will hand over these responsibilities as the new Congolese institutions gradually prove they are capable of maintaining order and respect for public and private obligations, and the protection of persons and property.

* * *

The Government, in proposing rigorous, but wise political action to the Congolese and the Belgian peoples, remains true to the principles which have always inspired Belgium's civilization work in the Congo.

It asks each and everyone to look resolutely toward the future.

The Congolese people will show their wisdom and maturity by undertaking with us the shaping of the new structures, and by assuming conscientiously the serious responsibilities its future involves.

This welfare depends essentially on the development of the economy in all its aspects.



All these who, in the territorial administration and in the other government services, in missions and in churches, in large and small enterprises, have, up to now, done their work with ability and enthusiasm, will find in the vast prospects that have thus been outlined in detail, resources of inspiration for mind and heart which will stimulate their devotion in serving the Congo and Belgium.

Belgium assumes a solemn obligation toward the Congolese people.

Thereby, the spirit of fraternity and confident collaboration will be strengthened and will thus enable the two peoples to freely unite their destiny and to depend on each other in the fulfillment of their individual pursuit.

(Unofficial translation.)

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and will thus enable the two peoples to freely unite their destiny...





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